

Create the Future, Forget the Past, and  
Manage the Present

THE

THREE

BOX

SOLUTION

A Strategy for Leading  
Innovation

**VIJAY GOVINDARAJAN**

*New York Times* bestselling author of *Reverse Innovation*

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW PRESS

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# Contents

**To my grandfather Tagore Thatha**  
who invested countless hours in my education  
to guide—and secure—my future.



R.T. Velu Studio, Annamalainagar, India.

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# 1

## A Simple Framework for Leading Innovation: The Three Boxes

**L**eaders already know that innovation calls for a different set of skills, metrics, methods, mind-sets, and leadership approaches: they understand that creating a new business and optimizing an already existing one are two fundamentally different management challenges. The real problem for leaders is doing both, simultaneously. How do you align your organization on the critical, but competing, behaviors and activities required to simultaneously meet the performance requirements of the current business—one that is still thriving—while dramatically reinventing it?

Managers and executives, consultants and academics, and analysts and thought leaders around the world have long wrestled with this question, and in response, some of them have developed a concept known as “ambidexterity”: an organizational capability of fulfilling both managerial imperatives at once.<sup>1</sup>